

*As Memorial Day kicks off summer driving season, more than 30 million Americans expected to travel by car this weekend*

Jericho, NY— Today, Congressman Steve Israel (D-Huntington) called on Congress to pass a long-term surface transportation reauthorization bill, which would provide funding for necessary road-safety improvements across Long Island. Rep. Israel was joined by Marc Herbst, Chairman of the Council of State Executives for the American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) and Executive Director of the Long Island Contractors Association. The transportation legislation is currently stalled. The version of the bill proposed by the Republican-controlled House would destroy 550,000 American jobs, bankrupt the Highway Trust Fund, and cut transportation investments in 45 states, including New York. The bi-partisan Senate bill is estimated to save 1.8 million jobs and create up to 1 million more.

Rep. Israel said, "With Memorial Day upon us and thousands of Long Islanders traveling this weekend, I'm urging my colleagues in Congress to stop the gridlock and pass a long-term transportation bill. Long Island roads, like Jericho Turnpike, are in desperate need of efficiency and safety improvements, but politics have interfered with common sense solutions. When the federal government doesn't fulfill its role, local taxpayers bear the burden."

Marc Herbst added, "What has become obvious to anyone on Long Island who owns a home, drives a car, has a job or wants one is that the condition of our transportation infrastructure will affect their future. There is a desperate need to invest across the country but nowhere is it more obvious than on Long Island. We applaud the Congressman's effort to create not just the environment for infrastructure investment but the means to do it."

This Memorial Day, the number of travelers is estimated to increase by 1.2 percent from 2011 with nearly 9 in 10 planning to drive to their destination. Although gas prices are at their lowest since February on Long Island, deteriorating transportation infrastructure will cause traffic delays and wasted gas for many drivers. Nationally, one in four bridges are rated deficient or functionally obsolete and 162,000 miles of federal highways have pavement that is rated unacceptable.

Our transportation system needs to be modernized so it is more efficient and safer for the travelling public. By investing in infrastructure, a robust transportation bill can create middle-class jobs in construction, in manufacturing, and in the retail and wholesale trade sectors.

The House recently passed an extension of the current transportation bill, but it will expire at the end of June, stalling roadway improvements and repairs amidst peak construction season. The Senate passed a bi-partisan, two year transportation bill by a vote of 74 to 22.

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